

# CAESURA

# CÆSURA

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## WINTER 1967

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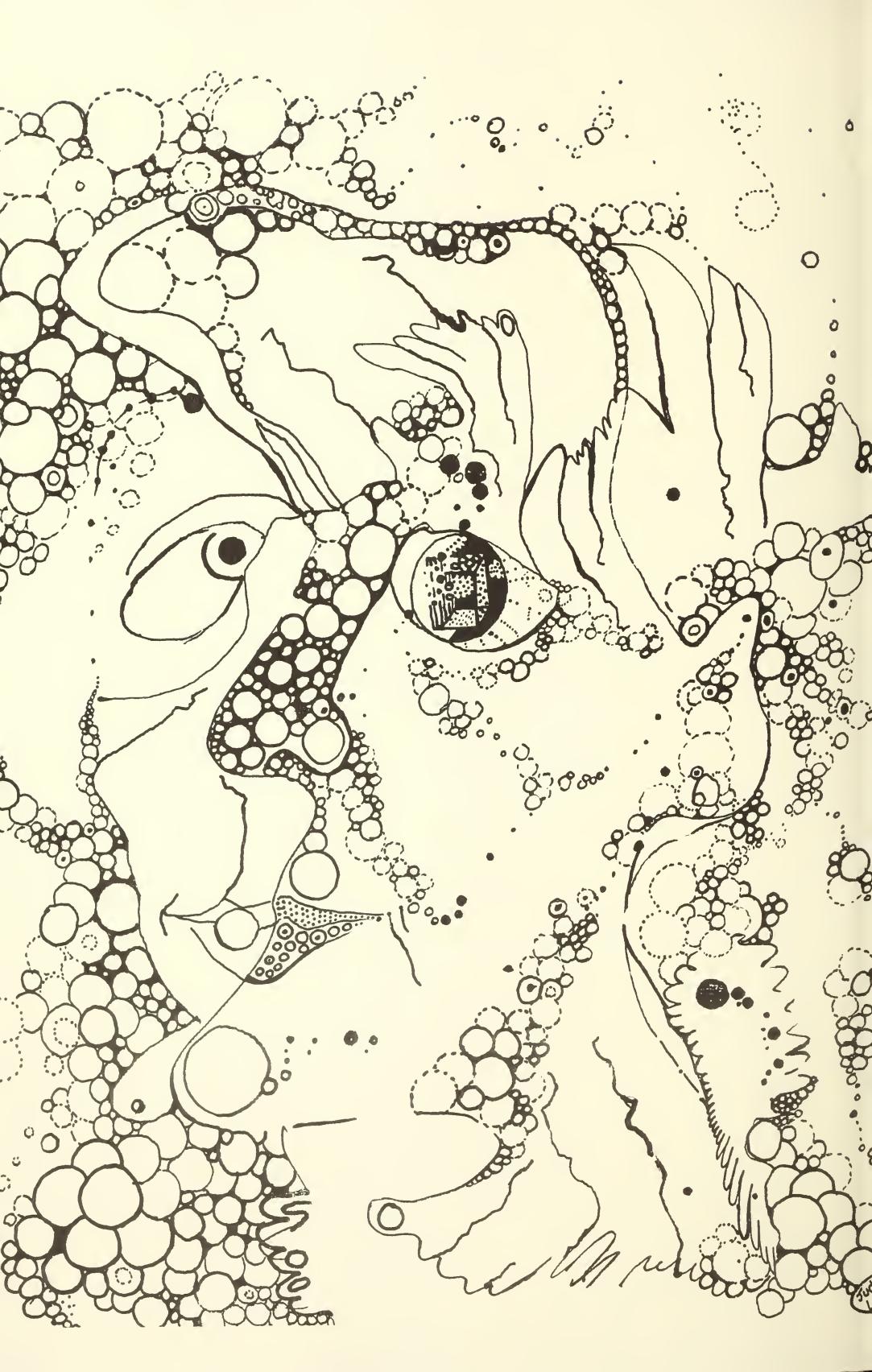


HEBRAIC FRAGMENT  
NEWLY DISCOVERED AMONG PALISTINIAN RUINS

*by JAMES CORTESE*

And it came to pass that Dan dwelt in the wilderness of Canaan. And lived he off the land; and off his own people, the seed of his brethren lived he also even. With guile and the edge of his sword lived he and took from them, his people, all manner of possessions: their lives took he; and even their oxen and their goats. Their women he defiled and dealt with them as with harlots; and young men knew he and that sin for which the Lord rained fire upon the cities of the plain. And it was as Jacob, his father, had foretold him:

Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path,  
That biteth the horse's heels,  
So that his rider shall fall backward.



And, behold, the countenance of the Lord was not toward him as before.

Then Dan advanced in years: no longer could he set himself upon the camel, nor carry away the cattle and the goods of his brethren that he might plunder. And he hearkened not to his own seed but took from them their riches and went in unto their wives and made them to bear when all had thought they had left bearing. Thus he hardened the hearts of his sons, who feared him yet because he was Jacob's son.

Now Dan was old and stricken in years; and lo, his seed rebuked him, saying, "Peradventure, thou shalt die in time. For thou art hoary and enfeebled, and despicable in the eyes of the Lord."

And it came to pass that one day, Milcah, the wife of Dan, came unto him in his tent and brought him porridge of mutton seasoned with mandrakes. And he said, "What hast thou brought me?" And she answered him, "I have brought thee porridge of mutton seasoned with mandrakes." And his eyes gleamed with heat and he was passing pleased for he had no sons nor any manner of progeny by his wife who was not barren and was yet upon the custom of women, though her years numbered six hundred, three score, and fourteen.

And Dan went to, discomfiting his porridge and, behold, it was ring-streaked, speckled, and grisled. And he spake unto his wife, saying, "Behold, this meat which thou hast given me is ringstreaked, speckled, and grisled."

And she replied unto him: "What though thy meat be ringstreaked, speckled, and grisled, thou art hoary and enfeebled, and despicable in the eyes of the Lord."

And his wrath waxed hot; and he threw stones upon his wife that she would cease to rebuke him.

And he was left alone. And, behold, he heard a voice from out of the mutton that said, "Dan": and he said, "Here am I."

But he became sore afraid because the meat possessed such power of speech and because the countenance of the Lord was not toward him as before. And he began to eat of the porridge; and the voice said unto him, "Dan": and he said, "Here am I."

Now Dan was sore grieved; and he was very wroth that his wife had prepared him such meat. But he said unto the mutton, "Who art thou that dwellest in my mutton and speakest therefrom?" And the voice of the Lord

said, "I am the Lord thy God, the God of thy forefathers, Abraham and Isaac: I am the God of Justice; and I am sore vexed because thou hast wrought wickedness in the land of Canaan."

And Dan fainted in his heart, for he wot not what the Lord would do unto him. And he gathered stones into a pile and made he a heap thereof that he might sprinkle it with water and oil.

But the voice of the Lord said unto him:

Behold, put away they stones,  
Thy stones let them be put away:  
And this day shall a Covenant be made,  
A Covenant this day shall be made  
Betwixt thy Lord God of Israel  
And thee and all thy seed.

Behold, thou shalt arise in the morning,  
And when arisen in the morning,  
Thou shalt erect an altar to the Lord God  
Upon this land whereon thou liest;  
And thou shalt prepare thyself for a burnt  
offering:  
And at the noontime hour, thy seed shall  
offer thee:  
For thou art hoary and enfeebled  
And despicable in the eyes of the Lord.

Now Dan fell down upon his face and wept he bitterly and bespoiled he his raiment. But the Lord heard him not; and he gestured wickedly for being so rebuked. And he fell to taking out the wax from his ears, there being naught else to do. Thus he called the place Meeni-balaaha which unto this day is "taking out the wax."

A.D. 1610

## THE BIRD, THE STONE: A VILLANELLE

Between two things: the shadows thrown  
Mark her a witch, the darkness shows  
A darker beast than light has known.

She moves between the bird, the stone.  
One slides above, one hides below.  
A woman might be less alone.

No man has caught her hair, her bones  
To line his sheets; in sleep she flows  
To darker beasts than light has known.

A rock, a crow become her zone,  
The climate that her moving knows;  
Some women might be less alone.

Shut to breaks, the body's moan,  
She leaves the field, her passions close  
On darker beasts than light has known.

She leaves the hearts that hearts have known  
To walk the elements; she knows.  
A woman might be less alone  
With darker beasts than light has known.

—ASHLEY WALKER

(UNTITLED)

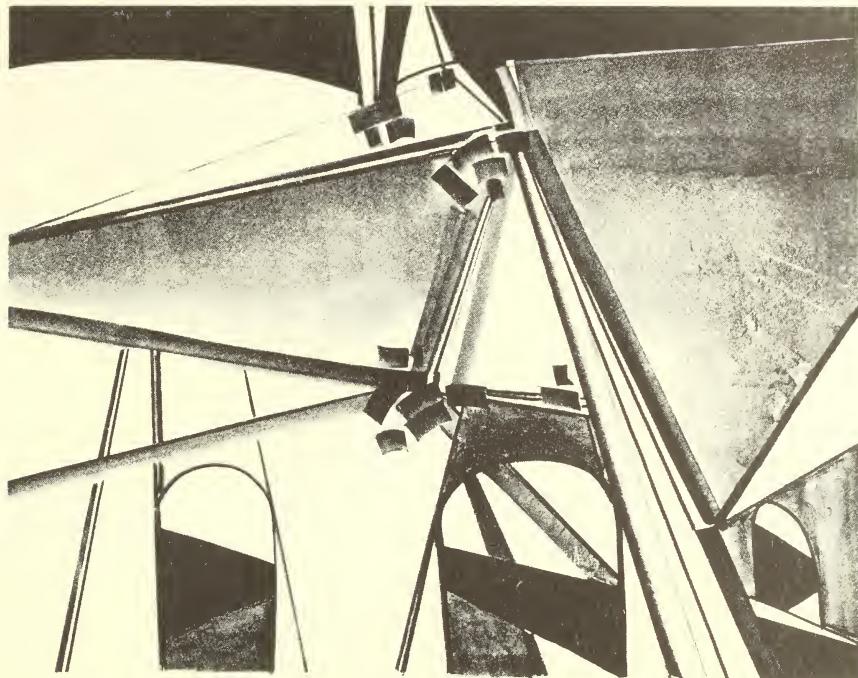
September  
and weeping willows  
shiver.  
In the ghostly mist  
of chilly gray mornings.

Now  
their ice-encased  
skeletons  
glisten and groan  
as their frozen  
fingers clink.

Spring comes  
and they  
stand  
budding green.  
In awe of their  
own pregnancy.

Heavy, humid, heat.  
Mosquitoes infest  
their stagnant hair.  
They weep.  
And their tears  
hang on the air.

—MEG JANNEY



### ... ALL BEASTS ARE SAD

I once recall ambrosial hour,  
Your eyes of pearl and crystal lips  
And breasts pretending huddled doves  
Or bunched grapes,  
Before the mottling took the rime.  
And we used to ride like bandits,  
Chasing gods to electric realms.

Mornings come blackly with old thoughts  
That reek the mind like plague —  
More precious and more bane.  
And our quaint lives, my love,  
Unfolding clever dearth,  
Lie choking subtle tendril;  
And after each little death  
Return to what they never were.

—SIDNEY ARMOUR

## NIGHTRIDE

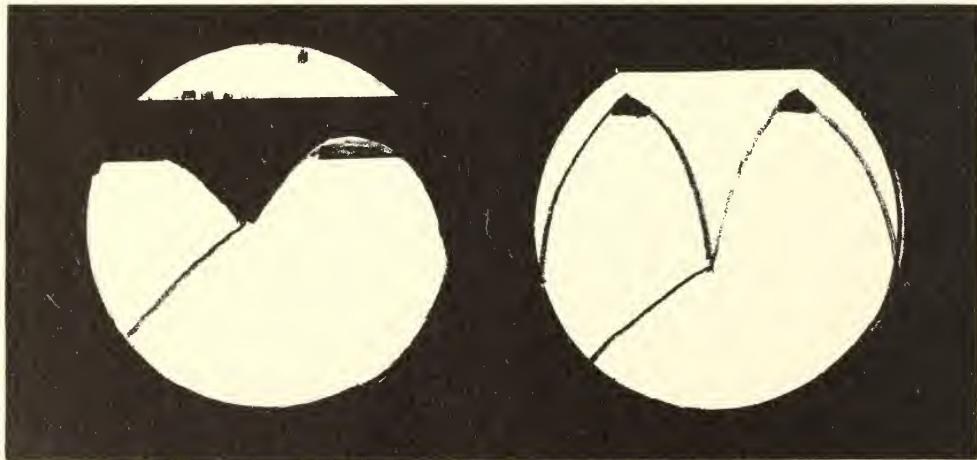
Half-empty busses  
flitting through the night  
are the saddest form of travel.  
A sadness that speaks  
of dingy waiting stations  
with old, wood benches,  
lit by single naked bulbs;  
of lonely, empty little half-towns  
populated with the empty shells  
of forgotten, unreal people;  
of neon-lit package stores  
that fling their hopeful, brazen plea

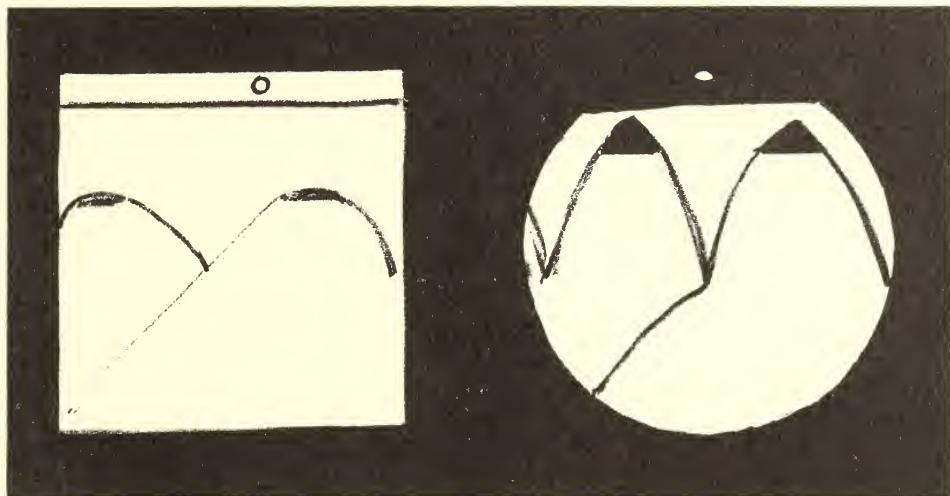
— COLD BEER —

as you pass like an unseeing wind.

Picking up passengers  
and discharging them  
here and there,  
with all their locked  
and well-guarded baggage;  
continuing on a circle route  
with no ultimate destination.

—ROBERT RUPLENAS





## REFLECTIONS IN OCTOBER

Before too long I'll be  
Dead and nervously waiting for  
It all to be over. Will my ears  
Be full of numbing organ smother  
Or keen to hear the novae hiss  
Or soft to hear the womb-bound sigh?

Before too long I'll be  
Dead and deadly enduring the  
Tacky satin-cushioned walls.  
I'd rather be scraping my knuckles  
On a cement Boston bench  
Or feeling his rough hands in my hair.

Before too long I'll be  
Dead and shunted off somewhere.  
Will the sound of slow dirt dropping down  
Remind me of the rigging slapping the mast,  
Or pinecones on the tent roof,  
Or another person in the dark?

—JANET WHELAN

## JESUS' KID

*by JULIA MACDONNELL*

There was in the days of Truman, the king of the United States, in the country of promise, a certain nameless, faceless man and his wife who was of the daughters of no one and she had no name.

And they were both righteous before God, stumbling by all the Commandments and ordinances of the lord, blind.

And they had no child because that nameless woman was frigid and they were both now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass, that while trying to do anything he could before God in the order of the course, according to custom, the lot of the nameless man was to drink strong liquor in the temple of his life.

And the whole multitude of the people were screaming from without at the time of his drink.

And there appeared unto him a spirit of the lord standing on the right of the altar of drink.

And when the nameless man saw it, fear came unto him.

But the angel said unto him, "Fear not, thy wife shall bear thee a nameless son that you may watch him in his misery as you have been watched.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the eyes of the multitudes and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the message, even from his nameless mother's womb.

And many of the children of the Lost shall turn to him as the lord their god."

And it came to pass that this man returned to his humble dwelling and took the frigid woman to the mattress and got her with child.

Now the nameless woman's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

And it came to pass that on the eighth day they baptized the child according to custom and they called him Little Nameless Jr.

And her neighbors and cousins heard how a god was good to her and they came and rejoiced, and drank strong drink and many became with child in the manner of the day.

\* \* \* \*

Highways long, twisted, black and eternal swoop, curve and cross leading millions to their nowhere. The heavens are dark and star-glittered; cool, calm but constantly fired and changing. Speed, color and greed fly past on the highway in eternal streams. Little Nameless Jr. moves on to join his multitude. Bo Diddley's gunny-sacked guitar hangs on his back and words of high-pitched surreality hang in his mind.

The wind bites this calloused hand that pleads for a ride on the crazy highway of night. Who will be the savior? The harried businessman, a horny mam, or a hungry fag? The lot is always the same and the rides are always brief.

Swoosh — Little Nameless Jr. arrives. Hot, smoky clubs, with the cool, near cool and wishers hanging in together: this is his spot.

Soon, the cracked dissipated voice screeches out — dissonant, lonely, like a coyote in the desert — telling of unheard of things, whispering thoughts cast away by many; confusing, mixing and conglomerating people, things and life into a grotesque reality. He bites the air with fierceness, flashes his tongue in thirst. Sweat glistens his face as he strains his fingers over the strings like an agile but painfully groping blindman. The voice, the music, ring out tortured, a fraction below key. The sounds drag the audience down with them, then spring suddenly into their cerebrums, snatching their sanity, and tease and laugh with it dangling high above their numb-struck faces. Then they race away, sliding down an eight-bar progression to an abrupt and dead stop. Silence.

Reverberating through the cracked crusts of his audiences are Little Nameless Jr.'s taunting words, echoing and re-echoing, bouncing, reflecting and agitating the emptiness of its cavernous core.

Drinking water, smoking a cigarette, slouched behind a ragged curtain of sorts, is Little Nameless Jr. His almost insanely dark, fired eyes stare into an empty distance, picturing the motley audience of long-hairs, disciples in striped jerseys. They're performing the ritual of picking up some Magdalene woman in blue jeans. He waits and the loveliest among them raises and floats to him on a cloud-high of amphetamine. She does not speak and silence is the sealing of their pact of understanding.

Another show, another song. The set is lilting and lyrical — no stones are overturned, no tangled snakes slither through the lives of the audience. Peace is attained on a quietly finger-picked guitar, softly, gently speaking of love and hope — sometime realities. A willow, wet from drops of rain, is glistening in the dull bright light of a sun struggling through silvery clouds

and is swaying in a spring breeze. The last note is high and prolonged. It floats off into the night like a feathered phantom.

Little Nameless Jr. sighs and packs up his guitar.

His listeners, bizarre in the smoky shadows, gaunt, strange and silent, are a kaleidoscope of colors, angles, and expressions. Flickers of despair mingle with cynicism and hope. A junkie's contracted pupils are dead in the sea around him. Red, orange, blue and yellow garments cross, blend and clash. Wooden tables and chairs are darkened, then highlighted. Faces with chins and cheekbones enlarged and distorted in the shadows with eyes murky and profound are all part of the landscape in this pit of life.

In its intensity, the mood of the audience has been teased to a climax. Terror and fear have shot across to lyricism and love, then back to ever more startling actuality. They have been torn by a poet guitarist, left frustrated and waiting: waiting for a philosophical statement, a simple sentence or phrase, a single word to tie up the bloodied, ripped pieces, to give them a meaning, a conclusion, yet all know it will never come.

But now the last dregs of coffee are swallowed, the last cigarettes snuffed out, the lights are dimmed and the disciples make their way for their god—Little Nameless Jr. He is hailed by palm fronds of applause as he shuffles past and his girl follows.

A sooty brick Cornelia St. apartment is the catacomb in which they will hide from the world, will shiver in their fear and hatred, will ease their pain with a drug or release themselves through one another.

As they loll and lounge in their individual sorrow, ecstasy or stoic indifference, in shadows and corners, there is one underlying dread or one underlying hope. Each eyes the other to see when it will emerge: everything is transient. All emotions are momentary and each clings to what he has for the instant, waiting for the basic emptiness to surface. No matter where they run, what city, what country, what road they follow, the certainty that nothing is certain is the tar pavement of the mind. So, they cling, grip and dig, attempting to fulfill themselves, only digging deeper into the pit of their hunger, enlarging and stretching it to the depths of hell and destruction.

Little Nameless Jr. is their prophet. His music and words are precious and are savored forever. They sing out what each thinks, but cannot say. This man, with his mass of curled hair and tattered clothes, is their idol, a necessity, to bow down before, worship, but never touch.

On Cornelia St. the party was cool as they always were, but the kicks

were old. With grass and amphetamine, they hung in space, not flying around the outer limits of heroine or cocaine, one finger still on the planet earth. Little Nameless Jr. is the shining light. The sadness that emanates from his eyes is a soothing balm for all.

But Judas is watching and waiting. He is lurking in shadows, hiding under couches, slipping behind doors and wafting in on the wind from up-town with the smell of the bigtime. And he watches and waits . . .

Next night, next town, next show — who knows — but he's found his mark and yet will plunder it.

Opportunity arrives.

He lunges, catches Little Nameless Jr. from behind and grapples with the back of his scraggly neck. With a big cigar, gray flannel pants and an auctioneer's yelp, Judas comes.

Little Nameless Jr. sells out.

He now hangs crucified on a larger than life-sized natural color billboard, an eternal twisted smirk on the tortured face. He hangs crucified on the crazy highway of night for all the world to see, alone.

And the thirty pieces of silver jangle in a gutter vault.

### FRED RUDER'S MOOSE:

A foreigner from Maine,  
gaunt and pained Othello,  
finds solace with the dairy herd  
of Herefords, bovine, unworried  
by his large, dark presence  
in Leverett, Mass.

Grass, shocking pink,  
his horns crown his difference  
from the benign cows. Allowed  
not here or anywhere:  
Tainted by darkness,  
Betrayed.

Alas,  
the Boston zoo tenders  
its regrets and welcome,  
deferential, glad to be of use,  
and the cows cry “moo-se”.

—VIRGINIA G. PERRY

## SONNET TO INTERNAL SEASONS

That I am out of home, my house grown over  
I know, and lack the touch, the breath to give  
Some feeling to my cracking boards, mortar  
Ranged in sifted piles; the walls unhinged forgive  
Neglect, and turn me to outreaching weeds  
And briarfields and broken trees that stand  
On blackened hills like splayed dark beasts to feed  
On all decay along my salted lands.  
I go from war to war: to rooms around  
Me, to the ground, the desolation does not  
Keep or fit, the joinings fall about: sounds  
Of natural harsh metals going out.  
I am in tune with breakage but confuse  
The rhythm of my falling with the earth's abuse.

—ASHLEY WALKER

## WAR: FROM BELOW

### CONSIDER:

The leaves of early autumn  
show no signs of color to follow.

### THE LILIES

are the prizes of yesterday's  
memorial services to the lost

### OF THE FIELDS

who left their lives on blooded  
ground, citadel of hate;

### THEY NEITHER

knew nor wondered at the time  
of their last breath the reason why men

### SPIN

to live and love, to be alone at night,  
to wish no more

### NOR TOIL

in the vineyard of the lord  
whose final rest they have secured.

### AND YET NOT EVEN SOLOMON

felt like these, whose brains  
lie browning in the open air,

IN ALL HIS GLORY,  
never to fight and die with guts  
exposed to hate and pain,  
WAS ARRAYED,  
in streams of tortured blood  
as if snakes in heat crawl  
LIKE ONE OF  
the poisoned chains of Dachau  
to leave the quiet finally in peace,  
alone and deserted like  
THESE.

—WALLACE MATTHEW

### (UNTITLED)

Sunflower bends down  
To spy upon sly children  
Cutting its green leg.

—TOM HUGHES

### PIAF'S LAST CONCERT AT THE OLYMPIA

The spotlight gnaws at her, cadaver green,  
And hollows secrets in her fluted face.  
Illuminated cobwebs shroud the keen  
Ripe notes, dry blossoms in a dusty vase.

The stage is clear and small, yet she is lost.  
Apostle preaching pain in green, she kneads  
Her brows, then mints a laugh like nuggets tossed  
to front-row gilded jades, for whom she bleeds.

She sings from urgent fingertips her dirge  
Of love, a witches' sortilege. She chants  
The threadbare, breathes old air and feels it surge  
With vital greed; her exit is a dance.

—JANET WHELAN





## JOHN

John,  
the fall.

John,  
the fall.

I'll spin my broom.

The clouds are slow, low,  
My old dress is laced with cold.  
Last night the leaves spun across  
the porch,  
Some wedged in cracks, some hit  
the walls.

I'll sweep them all into the high grass,  
John.

—JEFFREY LISTER

## SONNETS TO A MAD MOTHER

### I.

Your eyes could slit the surface of a room.  
Mother, you moved like water when you moved,  
Your strange smile firing like a doubled noon,  
And warming those externals you might love  
Would brighten all those parts of your desire.  
Your gentle walk would turn a body so  
To shake him like a shaking wire.  
He could not see what flowers were below  
That grew within the darker place you came:  
Black tulips lie upon the fields you found  
Turned wild in you, grown over a stain,  
Inverted in this tarnished underground.  
Your eyes that once broke men like bones  
Shine lunatic in darkening zones.

### II.

Consider this: the fault must be in me.  
I only know in you the whites, the darks  
Played over you in stippled ways, I see  
You flicker as a flame's flecked light, the marks  
Confuse my eyes, you shine like mica stone  
Will shimmer, reflecting those hundred mirror  
Parts of black and bright laid on in tones.  
A pattern grows web on web. I furrow  
Through the parts of your design, it reaches out  
Confounding all those sorrows madness brings,  
Becoming glory when the glint is caught:  
In such extremes insanity might sing.  
Your madness should not gleam on you so well  
That I believe in you and not your hell.



### III.

You gave me every deepening of all  
My parts; should I deny your corner now?  
You sit in hot-edged rooms, the white tiled walls  
Reflect your halfness, the low marring shows  
And wears you by small margins, unwhole  
I hear your screams again: "Je vous en prie!"  
Until your rage is blessed with pentethol.  
Designs of love, of falling are turning what I see  
Of you, and force my eye to circumstance  
But not to you: crouched, leashed, and clipped, your eyes  
Unclean and blind, discarding any chance  
Of your return to me, refuse my eyes.  
We are bound by patterns which are fought  
Between two people; this catching keeps us caught.

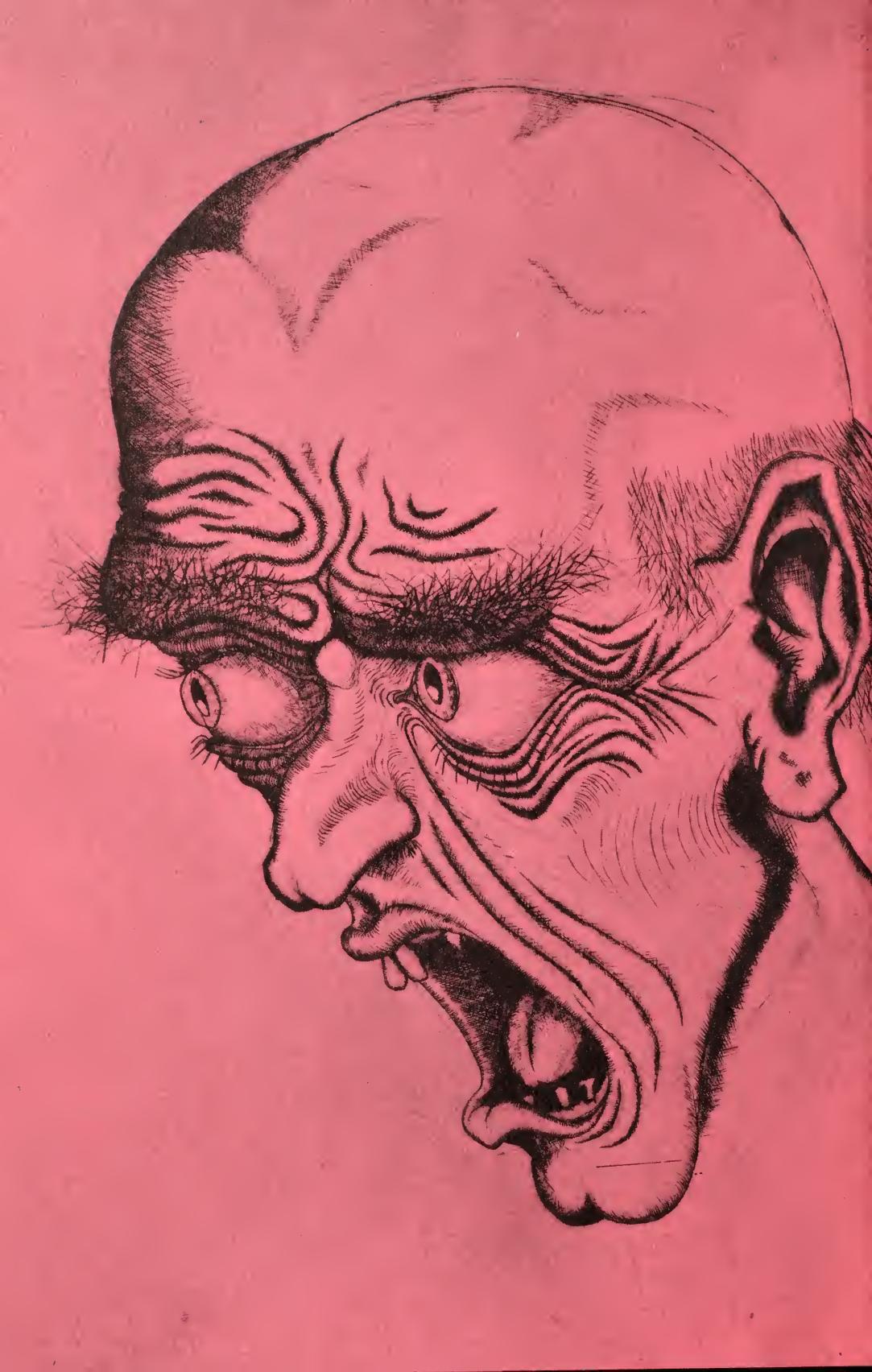
—ASHLEY WALKER

## COMMUNICATION

We're prisms, you and I, and when we meet,  
The words that spiral out just glance away,  
Refracted into space. From when we greet  
Until we part, we deviate each ray.  
Illusions screened in gauze, we each assume  
A standard pose at angles indirect;  
Full face encounter too much to presume  
Upon the scars our images protect.  
We listen in a daze; each word as in  
A dream: slants in, slants through, slants out and run-  
Ing, never leaves a trace. And when we're fin-  
Ished, it's as if we never had begun.  
And yet, in parting, did I see you reach  
Out, to impart beyond the bounds of speech?

—DAVID BLAU





## ORPHEUS IN HADES

by BURGESS NEEDLE

David Lily, pacing back and forth before his father, shouted, "But, dammit, you must do something. We've got this *huge* house, and tons of money, and God damn Caddies by the gross, so I've got to assume that you *do* something. You've simply got to do something," he carefully enunciated the last four words.

David's father, a man in his early forties, shifted his weight and looked at the floor. Both of them were short slim men with finely drawn features, but the older of the two had a more receding hairline and a glaze to his eyes that was missing in his son's.

"You've asked me this question before, David," he said, "and I have always answered you as honestly as I was able. There is nothing for me to do so I do nothing. The family is simply very wealthy due to prudent investments. Quite a sizable income is derived from rent-producing properties, stocks of various types, and negotiable securities. You've always had money to spend and I cannot understand why you sporadically insist on looking a gift horse in the mouth."

"Okay. So we've always been loaded. I grant that. God help me. I'll grant you anything you want. But the stuff must have come from *somewhere*. I'm out of school now. I don't have to lie any more about what my old man does for a living."

"Really, David, there was no need for . . . "

"But I have got to know. Is it something you're ashamed to tell me about? Was it narcotics? The slave trade? I don't give a sweet damn how we got it, I just want to know . . . I mean . . . hell, man! What did we have to do to get it?"

His father looked up and sighed heavily.

"This is Friday. I always go out on Fridays. We'll talk about this later, perhaps Sunday morning when your mother is back in town."

"Who is it this time? The redhead I saw you with in Boston? Sure, I know about that. How much of a dodo do you think I am? Don't you see that I don't care? All my life I've been gagging on this silver spoon. I've been obsessed with the thought of what it's been dragged through before it was shoved in my mouth. I don't even know why you had me. Ma just comes in to work on her gardens in the daytime and then goes upstairs to read or diddle around with her diary. On weekends she disappears. Poof! I don't even know her maiden name or if she's really my mother. Why do you two stay together? What kind of facade are you trying to maintain?"

"David, why you persist in creating mysteries is beyond me. Someday when I have more time I'll go over the family's history with you. As for your mother, well, we have quite an amenable arrangement. You were brought into this world to perpetuate the family name and fortune. There is no facade. In any case, it's late and I must go."

"... it's late and I must go," he mimicked. "For Christ's sake, if you only knew how many times *I've* just wanted to up and go. I'm telling you I will go if you'll answer my questions. I know there's got to be more to this than what you've told me. Please tell me there's more." (he started to cry and turned away so that his father would not see) "What do you say? Uh, pa? you . . ."

"Good bye, David," his father said, and walked out the door.

The young man stood there for a time watching the large black car pull out of the driveway, then he turned abruptly and walked to the liquor cabinet. He was muttering to himself as he slammed back one of the doors and pulled out a fifth of rum. Twisting off the cap first, he set it on a coffee table, then went into the kitchen. He emerged a while later with a tall glass, a bowl filled with ice cubes, and a six pack of Coke. After propping up several cushions on the couch, he settled back and mixed a drink in the tall glass. He stared at it for about fifteen minutes, shaking the ice occasionally, before he took his first sip. Several hours later he was still on the couch, barely conscious, holding a half-filled glass in his right hand and stirring the pool of water that had formed in the ice bowl with his left. Then he fell asleep.

He did not know at first what had awakened him. His shirt was still damp where the last of the drink had slopped over and stained it. Lightning

suddenly illuminated the room and after a time lapse of several seconds the thunder boomed. Most of the lights were off and he felt a twinge of fear. Slowly, he arose and walked over to the nearest switch and clicked it on. There were innumerable lamps in all corners of the main living room. Methodically, he walked around to each one until the room was as bright as a sound stage. The floodlights from the front of the house cast a pale luminescence against the windowpanes and they shimmered from the double barrage of whiteness. He paused by the grand stairway, then, almost as if he were wounded, dragged himself up step by step. When he reached the top he paused, looked back down, balanced himself carefully, and started to sway back and forth. When he was on the verge of leaning too far forward he stopped and smiled to himself.

"No," he said aloud to the empty house. "That wouldn't work, would it? Hah! God damn carpeting. I'm living in a powder puff."

He turned and walked the length of the hallway until he came to the swinging doors that led out to the sun deck. Somewhere in his past he remembered he had sat on the edge of the roof, right at this spot, and with his legs dangling over the side he had pretended he was Superman and with his X-ray vision he had searched the abandoned mansion that squatted on the hill just opposite his own home. There had never been any point in coming home on vacations until he had formulated the Superman idea and let his imagination fill in the house across the way. Through the years he had inhabited it with people, strange exotic people, and with his X-ray vision he had followed these creations of his in their every intimacy. It had been some time since he had last explored and directed the activities across the way.

The two doors swung open noiselessly and with a start he thought he saw his mother standing there close to the edge. His heart thudded heavily until he realized it was a scarecrow she had put together some years before to frighten away the starlings that attacked her gardens. It had been a rather ineffectual scarecrow and at the first sign of frost she had lugged it up to the sun deck and left it there to mildew. David addressed it.

"So you see, ma, the thing is I'd like to know where I came from. Ha ha ha, oh no ma, I didn't mean it like that. I mean I want to know who we're related to. Don't I have any relatives? That always puzzled me as a kid, ma, and the thing's really got me bugged. Aw, ma, all your straws are falling out. Here, let me. No, I insist. After all, I'm your son, aren't I? Well, blood will tell."

That was when he turned and saw the Indian. At least she appeared

to be an Indian from where he stood. She was easily the most beautiful woman he had ever seen and she was staring right at him from the porch of the second story across the way. It seemed as if she was illuminated by the fog that was starting to seep up from the valley. The light within the fog colored her dark tan and highlighted her cheekbones and straight nose. She was wearing a plain shift and her long black hair hung straight down, some strands falling over the front of her dress. David did not believe it.

"Well, ma," he said, turning back to the scarecrow, "I guess your one and only has flipped. I always thought I'd played that Superman game too long to be good for me and here I am with my fantasies before me and my sanity on the line."

He kicked out at the scarecrow and sent it toppling over the edge of the deck.

"Hey, you!" he called out to the apparition. "What's the story over there?"

There was no response, but she seemed to be still staring in his direction. He waved a few times, then turned and re-entered the house.

"Little music, boy, that's what we need. Little mood music for the soul. Now where the hell . . .?"

He rummaged through the house picking up magazines and looking inside cupboards until he found an album entitled "Offenbach in America." Whistling the overture to "La Belle Helene" he slipped the record out of its case and walked over quickly to the record player.

"Little speaker action out on the old sun deck and we'll be all set."

He placed the record on the turntable and clicked the machine into operation. The overture to "The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein" with its rattling snare drums punctured the silence and as the music rose he disconnected one of the speakers. He fumbled underneath the cabinet and pulled out a screw driver and a pair of pliers which he used to attach a forty-foot lead to the speaker. Humming the melody, he connected the lead, then, carrying the music in his hands, he walked back onto the sun deck and placed the speaker down facing the other house.

More fog drifted up from the lower ground and imperiled his view. He walked over to the edge of the deck and stared down. There was a flimsy trellis that led up to the sun deck and he examined it for several minutes before making a move. Clumsily, he slipped his feet over the side, then turned his body around and continued to lower himself until he felt the tips of his feet touch the top of the trellis. Carefully, he let his weight rest on the

top rung and when he was satisfied that it would hold his weight he released his grip on the rain gutter. The trellis started to buckle and he wildly clutched for the support of the gutter again. He barely grabbed it before the fragile white wood collapsed beneath him and he was left dangling. Above him the music was reaching a crescendo.

"This is one hell of a note," he said loudly. "Hey, Pocahontas! How's about lending me a hand?" he shouted as loudly as he was able, feeling ridiculous because he was facing away from her. The moisture in the air had left a smooth sheen on everything it touched and soon he felt his hands beginning to slip. It occurred to him to try and swing his way back up, but at the second of inspiration his grip gave way and he fell heavily into the bushes below. There was no sound for some time.

"They would have said I jumped," were his first words on regaining consciousness.

He stood up quickly, then yelped as he felt pain in his right ankle. Cursing and rubbing his thigh he suddenly remembered the Indian and looked up. She was still there. Falling back on all fours he crawled toward one of the floodlights.

"Christ, there must be five hundred watts going out of this thing," he muttered.

The base of the light was imbedded in a concrete block, but the top part was attached to a rotating elbow. Although it was rusty he managed to slowly turn it away from him until its beam cut through the fog and illuminated the other house. Her eyes seemed to absorb the light, they were so large and dark.

"Down here, you dodo," he screamed at her, seeing she was still staring at where he had been on the sun deck. There was no response from the still, poised figure across the way.

He grimaced and dragged himself erect, then, with a moan every time he accidentally placed some weight on his injured leg, he hobbled across his lawn, over the pebbled road that separated the two houses, up the slight incline of the other lawn, until he was immediately beneath her. She looked down at him.

"Hi," he said, and could not think of anything else to say.

She continued to regard him passively. He stepped back a bit and looked straight up into her open face. She had tremendous eyes, widely spaced, and she seemed hypnotized the way she stared down at him. There was another flash of lightning and she turned her face to the sky. He wanted

to reassure her, tell her not to worry, confide all his own secret fears to her and in their mutual fear find mutual support. While he was formulating these things in his mind she raised her hands above her head and started to twirl around, as if performing her own secret ballet. The music was now the overture to *Orpheus in Hades*. He watched in silent fascination. Then, with the grace of a wide-winged bird she placed one hand on the railing and swung herself up until she was balancing on its width, standing easily, arms outspread for more balance, like something he remembered as a fairy princess. She raised her arms higher and stood on her toes on the railing, and it hurt him to breathe, so afraid was he that she must surely fall and that that would be the end of everything.

"Miss, I . . . Lady, please! Oh please don't stand there like that."

And the thunder echoed again, this time in conjunction with the sound his fist made as it crashed through the misty white panes of the downstairs door. He grappled inside for a minute before he found the handle, then the blood from his cut hand made the knob slippery and hard for him to turn. Sobbing, he withdrew it, wiped it on his shirt, then stuck it in again and turned the lock. Inside was black, blacker than he had ever imagined existed, blacker than his worst fantasy had ever carried him. There was a bad smell to the place, but he rushed ahead and smashed into hidden furniture and fell several times before finding the bottom of the stairway. Feeling his way along, he climbed up until he reached the first landing. It had to be the first landing that led to the porch. He noticed some light filtering in from under a door. Opening it he found it led to a sort of den that in turn led to a double set of glass doors remarkably like the two in his own house leading to the sun deck. Slowly, he walked over to them and peered through the dusty glass. There was so much light. Where was it coming from? Then he saw it was the floodlight he had twisted around. The railing was in plain sight, but no one was on it. A frenzied can-can was playing off in the distance. He stepped out onto the porch and looked around. Nothing. He clutched the railing very tightly and peered over the edge. The light from across the way clearly showed the grounds and shrubbery below. There was no Indian maid, no pale shift to be stirred by the mild wind that was starting to blow. Nothing. The music stopped. Only the color of the fog remained to remind him of her dress and he thought about that for a time. The music stopped.

Shaking his head from side to side, he thought about the whole matter for some moments. His eyes slowly glazed and an inner resolve became ap-

parent in the set of his lips. Crooning to himself, he bent over and started to undo his shoe laces.

“Oh baby ain’t got no home . . . no home, but it don’t matter none with ole mammy aroun’ . . . jus’ fit them straws back into place and set with me for a spell . . . your son’s a comin’ home at last, dear daddy . . . hear what I say to you . . .”

And when he was finished untying his shoes he slipped off his stockings. Like a child he regarded his bare feet and smiled a far away sort of smile when he commanded his toes to wiggle and they dutifully twitched up and down. He felt no pain in the injured ankle. Grasping the railing, he swung himself up until he was balanced on its width, just as she had been, as he had pictured her standing there before. Carefully, he released his hold on the railing and finally stood unsupported. He raised out his arms and called to her.

“Lady, please come back. I’ll bet you didn’t think I could do this, did you? Well, I’m meeting you on your own terms. What d’you say?”

And hearing nothing in reply he stood on tiptoes searching the area below and above for any sign of her. He managed to stay that way for a remarkably long period of time before he slipped and fell, head first, to the concrete walk that arched up from the pebbled road to form a sort of patio before the old deserted house.

Although they found his body Sunday morning, quite a while passed before they found his shoes and stockings.



## BLUES FOR A WET SUNDAY

After swans and sunsets,  
Valentines and de Chardin,  
The sun hangs behind the granite farm  
For more than a thousand years.

And we crawl and muck about  
The shadow-pools of night  
Swelling amorous like the sea  
In the corner of your eye.

There was tell of a treasure  
More precious (they say) than gold;  
We sang songs once, laughed,  
Lit torches at the fall of dusk.

And clinging to each other,  
We sat in the damp grass,  
With frogs croaking and crickets  
Cricking: and ghoulish things

Behind the screens of night.  
Something in the holding:  
But children grow up tall  
To chew dust like worms.

Twilight things, like bats, they know  
That at the center, the pivot,  
Sets another sun, shooting  
Shadows for more than a thousand years.

These seasons bite like flies  
In the white silence; and love  
Weaves neither webs nor lies  
But the figment of our body's breath.

—ZOLTAN PODGODNY

## ORGANDY LADIES

Here organdy ladies once sashayed  
And danced like bells as the fiddles played.  
They coyed and blushed and flirted with fans,  
Played dangerous games for their gentlemen's hands;  
But once their husbands were caught and tamed,  
Never called them by their Christian names.

Dear innocent, arrogant organdy ladies,  
Your bones are dust on the parquet floor;  
Blown upward and upward in slow, gentle whorls  
By the wind from the broken door.

—ANNE AGARD

## HECATOMB

I found the rusty bedspring in the woods where it was thrown,  
Empty of embraces, bony echo of a moan.

—JANET WHELAN



## SONG

What night is this that I go out?  
My skin is wild upon my back  
    My eyes would sink the moon  
And children lose their smiles  
    As I go past.

Is any man alive who knows  
What beds I leave, that I turn back  
    Back, back from hands on me  
Like sweat, and curse them all  
    As I go past?

—ASHLEY WALKER

## (UNTITLED)

bamboo rising from flat expanses  
the air breathes, resting, quiet  
the crimson sphere lingers, huge  
concealing its shimmering holocaust in stillness  
a shadow of a heron  
flaps and sails across its glow  
to a place only the smiles of closing eyes know

—JOHN RHOME



45/00/c3

DEC 7 1979

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APOLOGY: The untitled poem in the commencement issue of *Cæsura* appearing on page 35 was mistakenly printed under the name of Jody Norton. The actual writer was William Saltman.



